574 609 travellers be refused the customary hospitality in a village and incur misfortune later on, the chief will make the people of that village responsible and they will have to pay a fine. In Gungunyana's country, warriors were sent to plunder such a village. Lack of hospitality, however, is not considered as a taboo (yila), because "it does not kill;" it is a bad action (biha).

Now-a-days, customs are beginning to change; hundreds of young men (magaisa) coming from the towns after working there, pass through the country, and it would be impossible to put them up and feed them all. They sleep on the *bandla* and cook food for themselves, occasionally buying some mealies or a hen from the inhabitants. Moreover they have plenty of money and they can pay!

609 618 761 It must also be added that, if they dispense hospitality liberally, the Thongas can be very hard on people who do not belong to their special clan. Feelings of humanity are sometimes strangely deficient. I heard of a boy of the Manyisa district who had fallen down near the lake of Rikatla, unable to proceed further on account of a bad wound received while working on the railway at Lourenço Marques. Nobody took pity on him because he was of another clan, and he would have died there if a Christian woman, named Lois, had not received him in her village and nursed him. Fear of death and its contamination may partly explain this want of compassion for strangers.

784 643 677 As already mentioned, it was formerly taboo to enter the village square wearing boots. These boots consist of sandals made by the hunters for their long trips through the thorny bush. They were not allowed on the hubo. A subject was not permitted to sit on a mortar or on anything else; the chief alone could do so, and it was considered a sign of pride to sit on anything but the bare ground!

609 177 574 The habit of offering a concubine to passers-by is never met with amongst the Rongas as it is in other tribes. Now-a-days dissolute women may offer themselves. But they have learnt from white men this new kind of immorality.

On the fate of the Thonga Village, see Practical Conclusions. V.

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

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CHAPTER IV

Taboo and Morality.

If we take the trouble to make a careful study of the life of so-called savages, we very soon notice that, instead of being free from all law and restraint, as superficial observers believe, their life is, on the contrary, subject to a great number of rules and prohibitions, by which primitive man is held captive in the bonds of custom and tradition. These prohibitions are of two principal kinds. Those which are most obvious are *the taboos*, which we have met with on each page of these two volumes. They play an immense part in the behaviour of the raw Native. But, in addition to these, there are other restraints which seem to spring from a totally different set of ideas, *the moral principles*. The relation between the taboo and moral notions is very difficult to determine. It is at the present time one of the most debated questions of Anthropology ; I shall try to show what the state of things is in that phase of human development to which the Thongas of South Africa have attained.

A. THE TABOO.

I ventured to give a provisional definition of the *yila*, or *taboo*, of the Thongas, when we met with the first interdiction of this type, Vol. I. page 37 : "Any object, act, or person that implies a danger for the individual or for the community, and that must consequently be avoided, this object, act or person being under a kind of ban." After explaining hundreds of taboos, I do not feel that this definition needs any alteration. Its main element is this :

183 834 *shitshabo*, viz., fear, or respect (1). There is no danger in transgressing this law of decency, but to do so is condemned.

3) When a young man has transgressed the taboo of *matlulana* (I. p. 197), having had sexual relations with the same woman as another man, he is not allowed to attend the burial of his rival. It is a taboo. However, if the deceased is his own father, the culprit can be treated with drugs, and so fulfil his duty of grave-digger, being protected against the dangers of his condition : "The *yila* has been removed, but the *biha* remains." *Biha* means that which is bad.

183 577 So there are three domains, besides the yila, in which the Native is conscious of the restraints imposed upon him : law or custom, respect or decency, and duty or *fanelo*. To these might be added a fourth, the disgust for a certain food (p. 83). The great difference between the taboo and the other prohibitions is that the transgression of the latter is not necessarily attended with danger (2).

Let us consider more closely the idea of *fanelo*, or duty.

192 183 577 Fanelo comes from *ku fana*, to be alike ; fanela is what is seemly, becoming. This is not as yet a very high notion of morality. The moral sense, however, certainly exists and this is proved by three facts :

1) The richness of the vocabulary expressive of moral ideas. There are more words applicable to the negative side of the idea and signifying *bad*, than to the positive, signifying *good* ; a phenomenon which may be observed in most primitive languages, even in our French patois. *Ku biha* means to be bad, morally speaking, and to be ugly, esthetically speaking. The distinctiveness of the two domains exists, however, in the mind of the Native. He says : "behile mbilu" — "is bad in his heart," or "behile liso" — "is ugly as regards his face." *Shibi*, the derivative noun of the verb ku

(1) I have heard the mixed bathing of men and women also called a yila, but it is a special kind of yila, *the yila of tshabisa*, the taboo of respect or decency.

(2) I would not, however, insist too strongly on the distinctiveness of these five domains. Theft and murder are prohibited on account of *duty*, but they become taboo if the culprit is discovered, because they will bring punishment upon him. The moral wrong of these acts was perceived *before* their dangerous character, and we have here an instance of a taboo grafted on a moral, or social, prohibition.

biha, is regularly used in Djonga to mean *sin*. It also designates the offensive substance which a child or careless person may have left on the path, instead of observing the sanitary regulations of Native villages. (I. p. 311.) But in addition to biha we have *dyoha* (Dj.), *doha* (Ro.), to commit a wrong, *hona* (Ro.), *onha* (Dj.), which means to spoil, but also to sin, and from which comes *shihono*, the true word for sin in Ronga. *Somboloka* means to be irremediably bad, crooked, like a stem which cannot be straightened.

On the contrary the adjective *nene*, corresponding to biha, contains three meanings: good, nice, and true, the derivate *bunene* designating rather goodness and beauty, and another derivative, *psinene*, truth; the verb used for to be good is *shonga* (Ro), or *saseka* (Dj.), and has both the moral and esthetic significance. *Ku lulama* is to be straight, like a stem, and the use of this word indicates a deep and clear sense of right doing. Many other expressions might be quoted, showing that the notion of moral good and evil is certainly present in the Native mind, quite independently of that of taboo. They also recognise the *conscience* (timpfalu), seated in the diaphragm (p. 361).

2) *Intercourse with Natives* proves the same thing. Though their ideas may differ from ours as regards what is good (1), they are undoubtedly moral beings, with a more or lees developed conscience.

3) Their *folklore* is the best and most objective proof that this is so. Vice is punished and virtue rewarded in all the tales which I have called *moral*, and they certainly contain a whole code of natural and elementary morality (p. 222). The pangs of conscience in a criminal are depicted in a wonderful fashion in Zili, for instance.

However, it must be confessed that this morality is low, that it does not possess a very strong hold on the Native soul, and that the imperative of conscience is by no means the categorical

(1) The idea of charity is particularly low: charity is due only to relatives, or to clansmen, and not to foreigners. I remember a man of the Manyisa clan who nearly died near the lake of Rikatla, having been hurt when working on the railway; nobody took pity on him, because he belonged to another clan. He was saved by a converted woman, Lois, who had a wonderful understanding of the new principles of universal brotherhood.

577 imperative of Kant. If you can steal without being caught, you
183 may steal! Such is the advice generally given. To tell lies is mere play, which few people take seriously, especially if the lies are not intended to do harm to your fellow-men. There is a great laxity in Native morals (1). Why is this? I am convinced that this weakness of the moral sense is due to the fact that the moral law is not regarded as having been proclaimed by a personal, transcendental God. No relation is established between duty and the divinity. Religion is non-moral ; the ancestor-gods themselves are non-moral. The absolute character of the moral law can only spring from the absolute character of a God who has established it. For the Bantu the law, *nau*, is the *interest of the clan*. Theft is bad because it ruins individual property, and it is necessary to respect property, otherwise collective life becomes impossible. So theft, blows, insults, murder, and witchcraft are condemned and punished, because these actions endanger society and its recognised modes of life. But if society is not aware of it, you may steal ; you are not guilty ; no one has been offended! This principle gives to the morality of Natives a very curious *legal character*, which White people are sometimes slow to understand. A man is not guilty if he has not been convicted of his fault by a regular judicial pronouncement. He does not even feel himself guilty. But if his sin is proved, he at once gives up all subterfuge (Compare Zidji, p. 206) (2). We thus come to this conclusion : if the great

(1) Let me observe, however, that the domain of morality is also the domain of liberty ; and where there is liberty there are also individual differences. This is certainly the case amongst South African Bantus as regards their moral conduct. Any European having Native servants under his direction will have noticed that some of them show real moral qualities, faithfulness, disinterestedness, straightforwardness, respect, even a capacity for self-sacrifice, whilst others are unmitigated liars and thieves and addicted to vices which endanger the welfare and the purity of the home. Even in the Native village such differences are met with. I knew, for instance, a young man who never adopted the gangisa custom, which almost every boy looks on as the legitimate amusement of his age (I. p. 97) ; something told him that it was not right, and he kept away from the girls.

(2) This tendency of the Bantu mind to consider as right and good any decision which has been taken by the group, irrespective of its real moral value, also accounts for a fact which those who have to deal with pupils of African Native Institutions have frequently observed. It may happen that the Principal of the Institution will voice an opinion, give an order or propose a measure which does not please the Native students, and opposition will manifest itself amongst the group. Some of the more obstinate

Z: Junod M-3 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

fault of Bantu religion is that it is non-moral, that of Bantu morality is that it is non-religious. No supreme legislator has ordained it. Hence the want of the idea of the absolute in the dictates of the Bantu conscience. 577 183

Nevertheless, the rudiments of morality are present in the Thonga conscience, the feeling of duty, the sense of right and wrong, and these are independent of the essentially self-interested idea of taboo.

C. RELATION BETWEEN TABOO, SACREDNESS AND MORALITY.

Some modern Ethnographers see in the taboo idea the origin of that of the sacred, and of morality. Amongst South African Bantus, the idea of sacredness is not a prominent one. It may be said that the person of the chief is sacred to them, being set apart; the law of hierarchy, the right of precedence belonging to the elder brother is also sacred, and this conception is very closely allied to that of taboo, though it does not necessarily contain the idea of danger. But if sacredness has been in certain cases a natural development of taboo, I do not think this is the case with moral ideas. 784 577 183

In some cases, morality distinctly preceded taboo; speaking of theft, we have just seen the taboo conception grafted on to a

succeed in persuading their comrades to a unanimous refusal of obedience, and as soon as they feel themselves thus agreed they will oppose their Principal apparently with a good conscience, despite his most persuasive arguments and all the patience that he may display. Morally speaking, they are clearly wrong; religiously also; the principles which they have themselves adopted indubitably condemn them. Yet they will maintain their resistance as long as they can face their master with a united front. But if the Principal is clever enough to take one or two of them — the most sensible — apart, and convince them, then the charm is broken. Feeling themselves divided, the pupils at once come to the conclusion that they are wrong, and they readily submit to the will of their superior. Such events may take place in other colleges, and amongst other races, I am afraid, but the difference is that amongst Bantus, just emerging from the state of collectivism, where morality depended not on the laws of a clearly conceived, holy God, but on the will of the community, the feeling of being right or wrong is above all determined by the attitude of the group. (See my paper on The Magic Conception of Nature amongst Bantus. *South African Journal of Science*. Nov. 1920).